



RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD

Naturskola Explorer Guide

Materials Needed:
pen or pencil, binoculars (optional)

LOOK FOR RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS IN MARSHES, ALONG STREAMS, WET ROADSIDES, AND MEADOWS

The female red-winged Blackbird has mostly brown feathers with streaks across her chest and back. These colors allow her to blend in with her surroundings in the marsh. This is called "camouflaging"



The male red-winged blackbird has black feathers with red and yellow patches at the top of his wings called "epaulets"



TO CAMOUFLAGE YOURSELF IS TO MAKE YOURSELF BLEND INTO YOUR SURROUNDINGS USING YOUR SHAPE OR COLOR. ANIMALS USE CAMOUFLAGE TO HIDE THEMSELVES FROM THINGS THAT WANT TO EAT THEM, OR TO HELP THEM SNEAK UP ON THEIR FOOD.



Look at what you are wearing today. Do you blend in with your surroundings?



What could you do to blend in better with the environment around you?

IN THE WINTER, RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS FLY TO THE SOUTHERN STATES OF NORTH AMERICA TO ESCAPE THE COLD HARSH WINTER. IN THE SPRING, THE MALES MIGRATE NORTH AGAIN A FEW WEEKS (BEFORE THE FEMALES) TO FIND A NEW HOME FOR THEIR FAMILIES.

Migration is the movement of an animal or group of animals from one place to another. Circle the reasons you think an animal might migrate below:



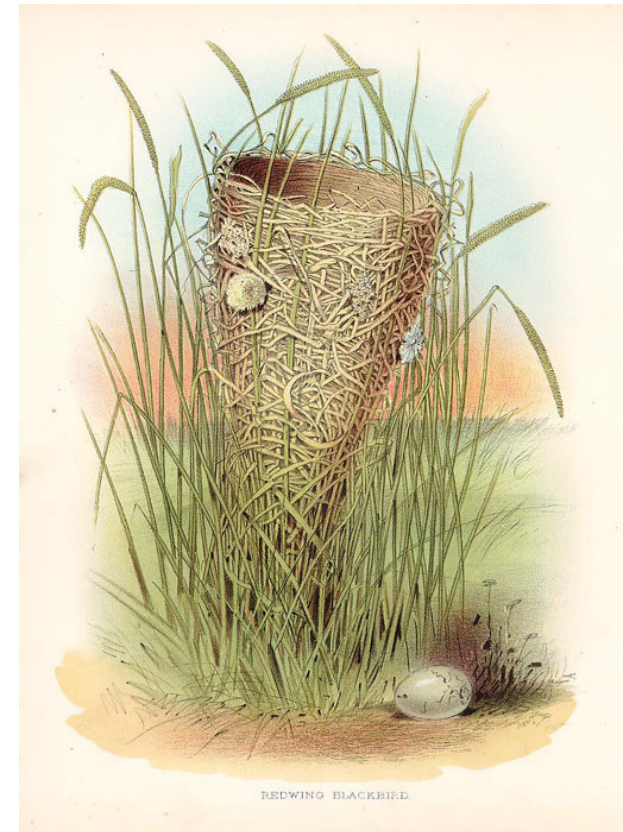
THE SOOTY SHEARWATER HAS THE LONGEST MIGRATION OF ANY ANIMAL ON EARTH! THIS BIRD FLIES UP TO 40,000 MILES A YEAR FROM NEW ZEALAND TO THE NORTHERN PACIFIC OCEAN IN SEARCH OF FOOD!



Answer: Animals can migrate for all of these reasons!

THE FEMALE RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD MAKES HER NEST LOW TO THE GROUND AND HIDES IT AMONG THICK GRASSES.

THIS IS WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE!



What other animals do you know of that make nests?



Listen to the sounds that a red-winged blackbird makes...some people say that it sounds like "oak-a-lee" or "conk-la-ree"!



What does the call of a red-winged blackbird sound like to you?

IN THE WINTER, RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS EAT SEEDS INCLUDING CORN AND WHEAT. IN THE SUMMER, THEY EAT MOSTLY INSECTS.



RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS HAVE A SPECIAL WAY OF GETTING INSECTS DOWN IN THE MUD IN THE MARSHES, CALLED "GAPING"



Gaping is when a bird opens its powerful beak down in the mud to eat insects hiding at the base of aquatic plants. Only blackbird species use this special technique!

SEE RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS IN YOUR OWN YARD!

Red-winged blackbirds love to eat mixed grains and seeds. If you spread them on the ground in your yard, you might get a visit from them, especially during their migration periods in the Spring and Fall!



EXPLORER NOTES

DATE OF MY ADVENTURE: _____

WHO CAME WITH ME: _____

WHERE I WENT: _____

WHAT I SAW: _____
